



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF MENTAL HEALTH
AND ADDICTION SERVICES
A HEALTHCARE SERVICE AGENCY

M. JODI RELL
GOVERNOR

THOMAS A. KIRK, JR., Ph.D.
COMMISSIONER

Memorandum:

TO: Select Committee on Veterans' Affairs

FROM: Thomas A. Kirk, Jr., Ph.D.
Commissioner

DATE: February 19, 2009

SUBJECT: **H.B. 6405, An Act Expanding Eligibility for the Military Support Program and H.B. 6406, An Act Concerning the Military Support Program**

Sen. Maynard, Rep. Graziani, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony on **H.B. 6405, An Act Expanding Eligibility for the Military Support Program**, and **H.B. 6406, An Act Concerning the Military Support Program**.

DMHAS is a health care agency which provides behavioral health services to persons 18 years of age and older who have psychiatric disabilities and/or substance use disorders. During 2008, we served over 90,000 individuals. We fund a broad spectrum of services and programs for Connecticut residents — including the Military Support Program (MSP), which was developed in concert with the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Military Department, to assist Reserve Component military personnel and their families as they prepare for deployment, while they are away on active duty in Afghanistan or Iraq, and upon their return to civilian life. The program operates a Call Center that is open 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, to assist Reservists and their families in dealing with a wide array of problems related to their military service.

H.B. 6405 contains language that would expand eligibility for behavioral health services under the MSP from that of "Reservists only" at present to include any member of the U.S. armed forces residing in Connecticut who has been called to active duty in either Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom. While we support the concept, we would be remiss if we did not inform the Committee that treatment services for the additional populations listed in this bill are not funded in the current budget for the MSP. Data from the Defense Manpower Data Center's Contingency Tracking System indicates that approximately 15,000 Connecticut citizens have served in OEF/OIF. Of this number, approximately 5,000 are reserve component personnel, meaning that they served with either the Connecticut National Guard or with a Reserve unit located within the State. The other 10,000 are veterans of active duty military service, and it is to these veterans and their families that the proposed legislation seeks to extend eligibility. Expanding eligibility to OEF/OIF active duty veterans would result in a three-fold increase in the number of persons eligible for Connecticut Military Support Program (MSP) services.

Based on the MSP's rate of expenditure over the last 2 quarters, program projections for the coming year to provide a range of behavioral health services to approximately 350 individuals are \$285,000, or \$814 per person served. Thus, expanding program eligibility to include active duty status OEF/OIF veterans and their families could result in a budget shortfall of as much as \$500,000 per year.

H.B. 6406 would codify the existing practice of having the Department of Veterans Affairs collaborate with us on this very important program, and we support this language.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony to the Committee on H.B. 6405 and H.B. 6406.